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TAGS:DCEN, PADM

SUBJECT: NYT EDITORIAL ON CBW

1. NOVEMBER 17 NEW YORK TIMES CARRIED EDITORIAL ON QUOTE YELLOW RAIN UNQUOTE WHICH CRITICIZED US ADMINISTRATION FOR COMING TO PREMATURE JUDGMENT ON CBW USE. TEXT OF NYT EDITORIAL, REPRINTED IN INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE FOLLOWS AT PARAGRAPH 3.

2. PROPOSED REPLY TO EDITORIAL IN FORM OF LETTER FROM PM DIRECTOR BURT TO NYT EDITOR FOLLOWS AT PARAGRAPH 4.

WE DO NOT KNOW WHEN THIS LETTER WILL APPEAR IN THE NEW YORK TIMES BUT WILL SEND YOU CONFIRMATION WHEN IT DOES. UNTIL THE LETTER FROM BURT APPEARS, YOU SHOULD DRAW ON THE SUBSTANCE AS PRESS GUIDANCE BUT SHOULD NOT REPEAT NOT REFER TO IT AS PM DIRECTOR BURT'S LETTER TO THE TIMES.

3. QUOTE TOO QUICK ON YELLOW RAIN UNQUOTE

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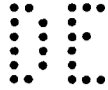
DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY fwlook DATE 11/17/88

( ) RELEASE ( ) DECLASSIFY  
( ) EXCISE ( ) DECLASSIFY in PART  
( ) DENY ( ) Non-responsive info.

FOLIO EO or PA exemptions CIA (483)

TS authority to:  
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THERE'S A SERIOUS GAP BETWEEN THE WEIGHT OF THE EVIDENCE AND THE WEIGHT OF THE CHARGES MADE BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT IN THE QUOTE YELLOW RAIN UNQUOTE AFFAIR.

YELLOW RAIN IS THE TERM USED FOR CHEMICAL WARFARE SUBSTANCES SUSPECTED OF BEING DRIPPED IN LAOS AND CAMBODIA. ON THE BASIS OF FOUR SAMPLES THE STATE DEPARTMENT IS ACCUSING MOSCOW, THROUGH ITS VIETNAMESE ALLIES, OF USING SOUTHEAST ASIA AS A TESTING GROUND AND THUS CHEATING ON INTERNATIONAL TREATIES.

REFUGEES REACHING THAILAND HAVE LONG REPORTED BEING ATTACKED BY PLANES DROPPING CHEMICAL SUBSTANCES THAT HAVE HITHERTO DEFIED IDENTIFICATION. THE NEW SAMPLES OF YELLOW RAIN TURN OUT TO CONTAIN FOUR FUNGUS-MADE TOXINS OF A TYPE KNOWN AS TRICHOPECENES. OFFICIALS SAY THESE CAUSE ITCHING.

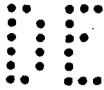
VOMITING OF BLOOD AND DEATH WITHIN AN HOUR.

DISCOVERY OF THE NEW SAMPLES JUSTIFIES THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S STRONGEST CONCERN AND THE MOST EXACTING SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION. BUT TO MAKE ACCUSATIONS ON THE BASIS OF SUCH PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE SOUNDS MORE LIKE AN ATTEMPT TO INDICT THE RUSSIANS THAN TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS HAPPENING.

BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S ACCOUNT, ONE SAMPLE WAS OBTAINED BY SOLDIER OF FORTUNE, A MAGAZINE FOR MERCENARIES. ANOTHER IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN FURNISHED BY THE CAMBODIAN COMMUNISTS. WHAT COMPANY IS THE DEPARTMENT KEEPING? WITH WHAT CERTAINTY CAN IT ASSURE THE PUBLIC THAT ITS SAMPLES ARE GENUINE? AND IF GENUINE, WHERE IS THE EVIDENCE THAT THE TOXIN WAS NOT PRODUCED IN, SAY, HANOI?

THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS SAID THAT TRICHOPECENE TOXINS DO NOT OCCUR NATURALLY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, A CONTENTION THAT IS PROBABLY INCORRECT. IT TOLD A SENATE COMMITTEE THAT THE SYMPTOMS CAUSED BY TRICHOPECENES IN ANIMALS MATCH PERFECTLY THOSE REPORTED BY THE VICTIMS OF YELLOW RAIN, BUT APPARENTLY THEY DO NOT. THE DEPARTMENT HAS SAID YELLOW

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RAIN IS SO NAMED BECAUSE IT PATTERS ON ROOFTOPS; YET IT DOES NOT EXPLAIN HOW PARTICLES LARGE ENOUGH TO PATTER ARE ALSO SMALL ENOUGH TO BREATHE OR TO DELIVER A LETHAL DOSE TO A CLOTHED HUMAN.

THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT HAS THE RESOURCES TO CONDUCT METHODOLOGICALLY SIGNIFICANT INTERVIEWS WITH REFUGEES, TO GET ITS SCIENTIFIC FACTS STRAIGHT AND TO PREPARE A DOCUMENTED CASE THAT WILL WITHSTAND SCIENTIFIC SCRUTINY. ONCE THAT HAS BEEN DONE IT WILL BE TIME TO PRESS THE SEARCH FOR THE CULPRIT AND, PERHAPS TO ACCUSE THE SOVIET UNION OF VIOLATING THE 1925 GENEVA PROTOCOL AND THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPON CONVENTION OF 1972. ONE OFFICIAL MADE THAT ACCUSATION LAST WEEK, CLAIMING THAT QUOTE WE NOW HAVE THE SMOKING GUN UNQUOTE. JUMPING THE GUN IS MORE LIKE IT. END QUOTE.

A. THE FOLLOWING LETTER TO THE EDITOR FROM MR. RICHARD BURT, DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF POLITICO-MILITARY AFFAIRS IS QUOTED FYI: DEAR SIR: YOUR EDITORIAL OF NOVEMBER 17 ALLEGES THAT THE US GOVERNMENT HAS RUSHED TO JUDGMENT IN CONCLUDING THAT LETHAL TOXINS ARE BEING USED AGAINST INNOCENT PEOPLE BY COMMUNIST FORCES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH.

THE MOST METICULOUS SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS OF SAMPLES FROM AREAS OF WITNESSED ATTACKS HAS CONVINCED INDEPENDENT AND GOVERNMENT EXPERTS ALIKE THAT TRICHOTHECENE TOXINS HAVE IN FACT BEEN USED. THE TESTIMONY OF VICTIMS AND REFUGEES MADE AVAILABLE IN DETAIL TO THE UNITED NATIONS SUBSTANTIATES THIS CONCLUSION.

I REALIZE THERE ARE SOME WHO WILL NOT BE PERSUADED. BUT IT WOULD BE AN ACT OF MORAL DERELICTION BY THIS ADMINISTRATION IF IT DID NOT VOICE ITS CONCERNS IN AN EFFORT TO FOCUS INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION AND BRING A HALT TO THE KILLING OF INNOCENT AND DEFENSELESS PEOPLE BY THIS PARTICULARLY HORRIBLE AND INDISCRIMINATE WEAPON.

THE EDITORIAL IS FACTUALLY INCORRECT ON SEVERAL ACCOUNTS. FIRST, NONE OF THE SAMPLES FROM THE REGION WE HAVE ANALYZED

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HAVE BEEN PROVIDED BY THE KHAM ROUGE, AS YOUR EDITORIAL SUGGESTS.

SECOND, NONE OF THESE LETHAL TRICHOHECENE TOXINS IS KNOWN TO OCCUR NATURALLY AT THE LEVELS AND IN THE COMBINATIONS FOUND IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. IN POINT OF FACT, THEY ARE NOT KNOWN TO OCCUR NATURALLY ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD AT THESE LEVELS AND IN THESE COMBINATIONS. INDEED, ONE OF THE MYCOTOXINS FOUND, T-2, IS NOT KNOWN TO OCCUR NATURALLY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AT ALL.

AS AN ADDITIONAL MEANS OF VERIFYING THAT THESE MYCOTOXINS DO NOT OCCUR NATURALLY, SPECIAL EFFORTS WERE MADE TO OBTAIN SOIL AND VEGETATION SAMPLES OF THE SAME SPECIES FROM AREAS IMMEDIATELY ADJACENT TO THE ATTACK SITE IN KAMPUCHEA FROM WHICH TWO OF THE POISONED SAMPLES CAME. NONE OF THOSE CONTROL SAMPLES CONTAINED TRICHOHECENE MYCOTOXINS.

THIRD, THE NUMEROUS VICTIMS OF THESE ATTACKS RANGE IN AGE FROM YOUNG CHILDREN TO MATURE ADULTS. CONTRARY TO YOUR EDITORIAL'S IMPLICATIONS, THEY HAVE BEEN INTERVIEWED SYSTEMATICALLY BY QUALIFIED MEDICAL PERSONNEL. THESE REPORTS, IN TURN, HAVE BEEN SCRUTINIZED AND VERIFIED BY OTHER SCIENTISTS. A CONSISTENT PATTERN EMERGES, POINTING TO THE SAME TOXIN SYMPTOMATOLOGY THAT WE HAVE NOW IDENTIFIED AS THE RESULT OF MYCOTOXIN POISONING.

WE HAVE MADE THE DETAILS OF OUR FINDINGS AVAILABLE TO THE CONGRESS, TO THE UNITED NATIONS, AND TO OTHER GOVERNMENTS. THERE IS NO QUESTION BUT THAT THE POSSESSION AND USE IN WAR OF THESE TOXINS IS A VIOLATION OF THE 1925 GENEVA PROTOCOL, THE 1972 BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION, AND THE RULES OF CUSTOMARY INTERNATIONAL LAW WHICH APPLY TO ALL STATES.

AS I STATED IN MY TESTIMONY OF NOVEMBER 10 TO THE ARMS CONTROL SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, THE SOVIET UNION IS PROVIDING COMPREHENSIVE MILITARY SUPPORT TO THE VIETNAMESE, LAOTIAN, AND KAMPUCHEAN COMMUNIST FORCES FIGHTING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. FURTHER THE

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SOVIETS ARE ADVISING AND CONTRULLING CHEMICAL WARFARE ACTIVITIES THERE. WE KNOW OF NO FACILITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA CAPABLE OF PRODUCING THESE TOXINS IN THE QUANTITIES BEING EMPLOYED, AND WE HAVE IDENTIFIED SUCH FACILITIES IN THE SOVIET UNION, WHICH ARE UNDER MILITARY CONTROL AND HEAVY GUARD. FINALLY, AS I NOTED, THE SOVIETS HAVE CONSISTENTLY OPPOSED ALL INTERNATIONAL INQUIRY INTO REPORTS OF THE USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS IN THIS REGION.

WE HAVE CALLED UPON THE SOVIET UNION TO TAKE SUCH STEPS AS ARE NECESSARY TO HALT THE USE OF THESE WEAPONS AND TO COOPERATE WITH THE UN EXPERTS INVESTIGATING THIS SITUATION.

THE EVIDENCE WE HAVE PRESENTED IS EXTENSIVE AND COMPELLING. DELAY IN MAKING THIS EVIDENCE AVAILABLE TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WOULD EXACT AN UNACCEPTABLE PRICE IN HUMAN LIVES.

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IS TO GET THIS ACTIVITY STOPPED. THE UNITED STATES WILL CONTINUE TO TAKE SUCH STEPS AS ARE NECESSARY TO KEEP THIS ISSUE HIGH ON THE INTERNATIONAL AGENDA UNTIL THAT OBJECTIVE IS ACHIEVED.

S. POSTS MAY DRAW UPON ABOVE AS NECESSARY IN RESPONDING TO INQUIRIES. CLARK

END OF MESSAGE

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